

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 161

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 152

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 161—Relative to the Joint Legislative Committee on Emergency Services and Homeland Security.

[Filed with Secretary of State September 21, 2006.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 161, Nava. Emergency services and homeland security.

Under existing law, the Blue Ribbon Fire Commission is established in state government by action of the Governor to investigate the circumstances surrounding the October 2003 fires in southern California and that commission recommended the establishment of a permanent Joint Legislative Committee on Emergency Services and Homeland Security. The Joint Legislative Committee on Emergency Services and Homeland Security was established by Resolution Chapter 106 of the Statutes of 2005, to continue in existence until November 30, 2006.

This measure would extend the existence of the Joint Legislative Committee on Emergency Services and Homeland Security until November 30, 2008, with specified membership of each house of the Legislature. The joint committee would be an investigating committee of the houses, and would have all of the rights, duties, and powers conferred upon investigating committees, including making recommendations as to legislation and forming technical advisory committees to assist it in carrying out its duties.

WHEREAS, California is the site of some of the most extraordinary natural disasters in North America, including fires, earthquakes, floods, landslides, mudslides, insect infestations, and drought; and

WHEREAS, California is the nation's most populous state, and is home to many of the nation's most critical military installations, industrial facilities, ports, academic institutions, and tourist destinations, and as such California is especially vulnerable to potential acts of terrorism; and

WHEREAS, The failed governmental response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005 indicates an immediate need to continue to assess and improve upon California's emergency preparedness and response plans, especially in the areas of: the specific roles of local, state, and federal agencies; evacuation planning; interoperable communication systems; emergency warning protocols; and private sector preparedness; and

WHEREAS, The emerging threat of avian and pandemic flu could also present unprecedented challenges to the state's public health system and thus place at risk the state's residents and our economy; and

WHEREAS, On November 2, 2003, then-Governor Gray Davis and then-Governor-elect Arnold Schwarzenegger established a Blue Ribbon Fire Commission representing federal, state, and local agencies, the firefighting community, and affected communities; and

WHEREAS, The Blue Ribbon Fire Commission was established to conduct a review of the efforts to fight the October 2003 fires and present recommendations to make California less vulnerable to disasters of such enormity in the future; and

WHEREAS, The commission, in its report to the Governor, made a number of recommendations and prioritized their importance, including the establishment of a permanent Joint Legislative Committee on Emergency Services and Homeland Security; and

WHEREAS, The Joint Legislative Committee on Emergency Services and Homeland Security, established by Resolution Chapter 106 of the Statutes of 2005, has reviewed the November 2005, recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Fire Commission and has taken action in support of the commission's findings and recommendations. The joint committee has also conducted numerous hearings on the subject of emergency preparedness and homeland security issues; and

WHEREAS, The members of the joint committee and the Legislature recognize that the work of the joint committee needs to continue; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Joint Legislative Committee on Emergency Services and Homeland Security is authorized to act until November 30, 2008, when its existence shall terminate; and be it further

Resolved, That the joint committee shall consist of 14 members, and shall include seven Assembly Members appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly, four from the party having the largest number of Members in the Assembly and three from the party having the second largest number of Members, and seven Senators appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules, four from the party having the largest number of Members in the Senate and three from the party having the second largest number of Members; and be it further

Resolved, That the joint committee shall be under the direction of a chairperson and vice chairperson that shall alternate between the Assembly and the Senate from session to session, and that initially the joint committee shall be under the direction of a Senate Chairperson and an Assembly Vice Chairperson, appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules and the Speaker of the Assembly, respectively; and be it further

Resolved, That the joint committee may provide a public forum for discussion of California's emergency services and homeland security and issues related to natural or human-caused threats to California; and be it further

Resolved, That the joint committee, in order to assist it in carrying out its duties, may form technical advisory committees, including representatives from the public safety and emergency services disciplines,

to help evaluate federal, state, and local strategies, provide technical assistance on an ongoing basis, and take active roles in supporting the passage of any necessary legislation; and be it further

Resolved, That the joint committee may work in cooperation with the Governor and the standing committees and subcommittees of the Legislature to address the level of support necessary for public safety and related agencies to implement essential emergency services and homeland security policies; and be it further

Resolved, That the joint committee may periodically report its progress and make recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature; and be it further

Resolved, That the joint committee and its members shall have and exercise all of the rights, duties, and powers conferred upon investigating committees and their members by the Joint Rules of the Assembly and Senate as they are adopted and amended from time to time, which provisions are incorporated herein and made applicable to this committee and its members; and be it further

Resolved, That the Senate Committee on Rules may make moneys available from the Senate Operating Fund, as it deems necessary, to pay expenses of the joint committee and its members, and that any expenditure of moneys shall be made in compliance with policies set forth by the Senate Committee on Rules and shall be subject to the approval of the Senate Committee on Rules; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.